

M E R C A T O R.

From Tuesday, September 1. to Thursday, September 3. 1713.

*The probability of the Quantity of our Importations from France being less than ever, farther proved:
Two Hundred thousand Pound sunk in the Scheme-Account by the decrease of Foreign wrought Silks only.
The like in proportion in the Brandies.
The like in Lockrams and Dowls.
And the like in the Wine Trade.
If these high Duties are not enough, Britain at Liberty to lay on more: France is not at the same Liberty.*

IF what the *MERCATOR* has advanced in the two last Papers be rational, relating to the probability of the Advantage of the French Trade, then it must be a strange Principle from which Men Oppose this Treaty, and upon which they pretend to suggest to the Nation, that the Trade to France will be to our general Prejudice.

Let us dwell a little upon some of the Articles, and lay it home to the Reason of all that Oppose us.

The Scheme, so often mentioned in this Paper, represents the Import of French Wine to be one Year with another 11000 Ton, Brandy 4000 Ton, French wrought Silks 150000 Pound weight.

Not that this Account is right at all: Let none suppose, that from this Paper the wrought Silks never came up to such a Quantity by any of the Custom-House Accounts, that have been yet taken out, by a great deal, and the French Wine has been often more; but to lay a Foundation to Argue upon, we will for the present suppose it to be as they say, however extravagant.

This was when the Duties were low, as has been said, (viz.) Wine 7 l. 10 s. per Ton, or little more, Brandy 1 l. 10 s. wrought Silks about 3 s. per Pound weight. Now let any reasonable Man Calculate, whether it be probable, we shall Import 150000 Pounds weight of wrought Silks from France, when One Half, or One Third at least, is to pay 1 l. 14 s. per Pound, the rest 10 s. 6 d. and 12 s. per Pound. If the Mercers were to be askt this Question, and would Answer it Impartially, what would they say? Besides the Improvement made in the Broad-Weaving, of which the *MERCATOR* may speak by it self; Can it be Rational, that any thing like the Quantity formerly Imported should now come in? We know, and the Mercers must own, that the Alamodes and Lustrings must wholly cease, which was always allowed to be One Third of the whole Import, as above, if not Half; these cannot be Dealt in or sold, if the Duty is to be paid, the Nature of the thing will not admit it: So there is One hundred thousand Pound per Annum sunk in One Article, and that by their own reckoning. As to private Trade, that is a Thing by it self, and cannot be made any Use of in the Argument; perhaps also a Method may be found out to prevent the Mercers selling these Goods openly, as they do, or to make them buy that Liberty dearer, than they may think safe to venture.

Of the other Branch of wrought Silks, not a Half will in all probability be Sold, the Disadvantage of the Duty, and the Improvement of our Weavers being considered.

And let any indifferent Man judge of this, (viz.) Whether the Improvement of our Broad-Weaving, being considered on one Hand, and the Duty on Foreign wrought Silk, considered on the other, it is probable, that One Half of the Quantity should be Imported as was before; and if so, there is One hundred thousand Pound more taken off of their Account: But of this we shall speak again more particularly.

Then in the next place take the Brandy: In the Scheme, they say, that about 4000 Ton of Brandy was the usual Quantity Imported in a Year; now if we do grant this for the present, yet it must be with this Notice, (1) That this was, when the Distilling of Malt Spirits was but a mean Business, and very little was Distilled but Brewers Wash, Melasses, &c. And, (2) French Brandy paid but Thirty Shillings per Ton Duty.

The Distilling of Malt Spirits is now arrived to a very great Perfection; all our Strong-Water Trade, Geneva, Cordial-Waters, Black-Cherry Brandy, &c. and all the ordinary Draught, is made of them, and must still be so: The French Brandy is to pay 51 l. per Ton Custom, and will be too dear for those things; let any of the Opposers tell us then, if it can be Rational to believe, that above a Thousand or Fifteen Hundred Ton of Brandy, at the most, can be Consumed here in a Year, at that Price; and in this Sum, it is certain we are beyond the Quantity a great deal.

Do they consider, that the very Custom of 4000 Ton of Brandy now must be Two hundred Pound a Year, besides the Importation in Scotland; will it ever be a Maxim again, that CHEAPNESS causes Consumption; if the same Quantity of Brandy can be Consumed here at 51 l. a Ton Duty, as was at 30 s.?

We are now only upon Probabilities, which however is what has been much made use of in this Dispute, and has been our Opposers only Methods to prove the Trade with France Destructive: The World will be judge, whether the Probabilities are not against them also: For if the probable Abatement of the French Importations were exactly Stated, we should find the French Trade low enough.

How should it be otherwise? The Argument stands thus.

Our high Duties on their Goods are to remain, as has been Stated; therefore the Quantities formerly Imported must abate, BECAUSE Dearthness lessens Consumption.

All their Duties on our Goods are to be taken off in France; therefore the Quantities formerly Exported thither must increase, BECAUSE Cheapness causes Consumption.

If Party-Interests did not blind and bewitch our Reason, we should be Silenced with the force of these Arguments: We are still upon the first of them, and particularly the Silks.

The Quantity of Silks must abate, because we can Import no more Alamodes and Lustrings at all: Our other Silks are made so good in England, that the Duty of 12 s. and 10 s. 6 d. per Pound weight, will give them a manifest Advantage; and nothing of the Quantity can be pretended to, which used to come in. We have Calculated the Import of French wrought Silks by the Scheme, for Argument sake, at the Value of 300000 l. per Annum; but it will appear, that this is a most unjust and exorbitant Guess; the most we find Imported in any Year, is in the Year 1686-7, aforesaid, when it amounted



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to 116930 l. weight; the next Year (viz.) 1687-8. amounted to but 90452 l.; the Medium of both which is 103691 l. This they Rate at 40 s. per Pound, the Custom-House Valuation was always but 1 l. 8 s. per Pound. If then the Importation of wrought Silks from France was 103691 Pound weight, by a Medium of the two Sums, when the Trade was in its height; let us first take off One Third for the Alamodes and Lustrings, and abate One other Third for the wrought Silk made now in England, then the whole Import of wrought Silks from France must, for the future, amount to One Third, which is 34563 Pound weight; and this is as much as can be reasonable to think can be Imported from France in a Year, which is but a trifle, compared to what they have talked of in all their Accounts.

Thus the Article of 300000 l. Value Imported in One Year from France in wrought Silks, is fallen to 34563 Pound weight, which at 28 per Pound, which was the Value allowed at the Custom-House, amounts to 48388 l. 4 s. and no more; and I shall afterwards prove, that One Third is sufficient to be allowed.

In like manner in the Sail-Cloth and Paper; if it is a Mistake, it is not the *MERCATOR*'s Mistake; when it is published that the Paper-Makers say of 191000 Ream of ordinary Paper, which usually was Imported from France in a Year, there will not be the odd 41000 Ream now Imported; that all our Pamphlet Printing-Paper, which God knows is too considerable a Quantity, is made at home; and all coarse Work also; so that here will probably be 150000 Ream of ordinary Paper, less than ever, Imported; which, by the Valuation of the Scheme, amounts to 5 s. each Ream, which tho' much Over-valued, yet is of their own doing; this makes 37000 l. Sterling abated in that Article.

I might have insisted on the like Case in the Linen Trade: The two Articles of Dowlas and Lockram amounted to a very great Sum, the *SCHEME* says 60000 Pieces in a Year, tho' that is not rational. The Quantity we find Imported by the Custom-house Books, in the Year 1687-8, is but 41050 Pieces.

Since the French Trade has been Prohibited, we have found four ways to supply this Want, as good and as cheap as the French; (viz.) from Germany, which we call *Hamborough-Dowlas*, from Scotland since the Union, free of Custom, from Lancashire, and from Ireland, from all which Places such Quantities, and so good Cloth of the same kind with the French, and for the same Uses, are furnished, that although it is allowed the French will bring in a great deal, yet by a modest Allowance, it is the Judgment of several Dealers in Linen, that not above one half of the usual quantity can be supposed to come in; so that tho' the *SCHEME*-Account should be true, we shall Import less than before by the Number of 30000 Pieces: And if our Account from the Custom-House Book is true, we shall bring less by 39525 Pieces, which at the Valuation set down in the said Scheme, (viz.) of six Pounds per Piece, amounts to 237150 Pounds less Value than they say uses to come in.

There was an Article also in our Imports from France, which was called *Brussels Linen*; this was Green Scots Cloth, which the French had from Scotland, and generally Bleached it in France, or else dyed it there; and of this, in the Year 1686-7, we Imported from France 36101 Ells. It is hoped every one will allow this shall come no more *THAT WAY* now; all the Duty being taken off by the Union, and an Addition laid on it from France.

Thus in almost every Article, we find Reason to acknowledge, that the Quantities of French Goods, which for the future will be Imported hither from France, will be considerably less than ever they were; because either the Equivalent of them being made at home among our selves to Advantage, we shall not want them; or the high Duties laid on, and which by the Treaty are to be continued, adding greatly to the Price, must lessen the Demand, because *DEARNESS* of every Commodity hinders the Consumption.

If it be questioned, Whether the Quantities of Paper, Canvas, Coarse Linen, &c. instead of Lockrams, Wrought Silks, and other of the Goods mentioned before to be made in Britain, are likely to lessen the Import of those Goods from France, as is said above; we shall help such Objectors to a sure Rule to know it by; (viz.) Let the Custom-house Books be examined, and see, if there be an Encrease of the Importation of Hamborough Dowlas or other such Linen, Hollands Duck or other Canvas fit for Sails, Ordinary Paper, Wrought Silks, &c. from other Places, proportioned to what used to be brought from France; if there is not, it may be hoped they will believe the rest has been supplied at home; if not, they must prove, either that we have not wanted it, or where we have had it.

The *MERCATOR* lays this down with all the Plainness and Caution possible, and forbears to enter upon many Species of Goods, in which the like Probability is also reasonable, but insists on these as undeniable, and what he thinks cannot be disputed.

The Wine Trade remains to be spoken to; in which he leaves the Opposers to their own Calculations, which hitherto have been extravagant enough; but refers it to impartial Judgments to determine, whether they think it is reasonable to imagine, that the same Quantity of Wine shall be Imported paying 27 l. per Ton, or 24 l. odd Mony per Ton Custom, as was when they paid but 7 l. 10 s. Custom. Let these Men impartially judge of the thin French Whites, which were always low prized, and were often sold in Taverns for 9 d. and 10 d. per Quart, whether will the same Quantity be drank of them now, when they must at least be sold for 16 d. or 18 d. per Quart, and when the Lisbon Whites, the Oporto Whites, and the Mountain Malaga's, will be sold at the same Price.

Let them examine the general Expence of Wine in the whole Kingdom, putting all sorts of Wine together, and see, if there is as much Wine drank in the Kingdom as was in the Years 1685, 1686, and 1687. Let them examine the Excise upon Beer and Ale, and they will find the Expence of Malt Liquors exceedingly encreased, which no other Reason can be assigned for, than the Dearness of Wine; and it has been allowed even by some of those, who now argue against it, that this has been the only Reason.

What other Reason can be given? They cannot alledge Encrease of People; the War may have lessened them, but has hardly encreased them: They cannot alledge an Encrease of Wealth; the War cannot have left us Richer than it found us, Poorer indeed it may.

All that we can suggest for an Encrease of the Consumption of Wine, must be, that as Men are grown poorer they spend more Mony; which will hold good in but a very few, unless they will alledge the Misery and Disasters of our People have made them drink Wine to raise their Spirits: And this is but an awkward Jest upon the Prosperity of the War.

Upon the whole it seems probable, that the Importation of Wines from France will be considerably lessened, as well as it is in other Goods, by reason of the high Duties; which, by this Treaty, are still to remain upon them; and, as in the other Articles, *BECAUSE* Dearness lessens Consumption.

But to close all, If upon the Experiment of the Treaty, it should be found, that the French Imports should over-balance Us, which the *MERCATOR* thinks is not at all probable; yet is there not left a Power by the Treaty to lay what higher Duties they please upon them till the Consumption is entirely interrupted: And is there any thing in the Treaty to hinder this, save that the same Duties be laid upon the like Goods from other Countries?

Whereas, on the other hand, the French are pin'd down by the Treaty to take all their high Duties off, and never to lay any more on; an Article which we should have thought to be very dishonourable, if we had been obliged to the like.

LONDON: Printed for BENJ. TOOKE, at the Temple-Gate; and JOHN BARBER, on Lambeth-Hill. (Price 3 Half-pence.)

